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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0074
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6916
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7233
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2555
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5277
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6426
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2984
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0246
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4568
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2292
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3487
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000329

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/22/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: NEPAL: CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF NOT FIRED YET

REF: A. KATHMANDU 320
[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 325

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Randy W. Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Latest Developments On Army Chief

[1](#)1. (C) As of close of business on April 22, the Maoist-led Government of Nepal (GON) had not relieved embattled Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Rookmangud Katawal of his duties. The latest developments (since Ref B) include:

-- At a brief cabinet meeting the morning of April 22, ministers were given copies of the GON's letter to Katawal, and Katawal's written response. Ministers did not take any decisions.

-- The evening of April 21, approximately 5,000 Maoists or their supporters from Maoist-affiliated organizations gathered in central Kathmandu with the aim of celebrating Katawal's firing, or protesting if the cabinet decided to permit Katawal to stay on, but the planned cabinet meeting did not take place. According to the police, speakers threatened that a decision to retain Katawal could lead to further protests, including entering NA headquarters and "dragging Katawal out."

-- President Ram Baran Yadav reportedly told Prime Minister Dahal April 22 that he should try to find consensus with other parties.

-- Local media is reporting that Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML) President Jhalanath Khanal is cutting short his trip to China and returning to Kathmandu on April 22. However, UML contacts told Emboff that Khanal will not be returning until early afternoon on April 23. Khanal's party rival, K.P. Oli, has been outspoken in his criticism of the Maoist threat to relieve the COAS. The UML standing committee is expected to meet after Khanal's return.

Comment

[1](#)2. (C) The army chief appears to have dodged the bullet for at least one more day. Both of the Maoists' primary

coalition partners (UML and the MPRF) and the President are at the very least extremely hesitant about Katawal's immediate removal, and the Nepali Congress is staunchly opposed. On April 22, the Prime Minister's Office called to invite the Ambassador and selected other ambassadors to a morning briefing April 23 on the "current issue." The PM appears to want to take the international community's pulse before he takes the next step.

POWELL